



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

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Testimony of Kate Ryan
To the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
July 14, 2015
HB 110/SB86 An Act to increase the Commonwealth's compliance with
federal law meeting requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Khan, Chairwoman Flanagan and Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you on HB 110/SB 86 An Act to increase the Commonwealth's compliance with federal law meeting requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. My name is Kate Ryan and I am a Council Member of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council. The Council is federally mandated to educate policy makers on both the state and federal level about the intent of legislation and its' impact on people with Developmental Disabilities. In addition, the Council works to improve the system of supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by bringing together lawmakers with advocates to make sure people with developmental disabilities are included in decisions about public policy.

My name is Kate Ryan. I am 30 years old. In the winter of 2008, I received my master's degree in interdisciplinary studies with a focus on disability studies. I have been looking for work quite steadily since then and have found almost no success. I have many strengths that I believe would be of good use at a non-profit or disability agency, however, my resume will get me the interview but my disability, Asperger's syndrome, usually ensures that I am never called back.

Asperger's syndrome impacts my ability to find full-time employment by making it harder for me to do things socially and harder for me to organize and present myself in a professional way. For example, I have some odd mannerisms that will come out during an interview, and I find it very hard to maintain eye contact. I also require some simple accommodations on the job, such as access to natural light, and some requirements of entry-level jobs, such as being a receptionist or working late hours, simply do not work for me due to my disability.



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This bill would help me because it would require training for the people who are doing the hiring. The training would include information on various types of disabilities including invisible disabilities. It would teach people to not just reject someone, like me, because they don't think I would be a 'good fit'. If they could look at my application and see that I checked the box for disability, even if they don't know what my specific disability is, they would know that I would count towards the 20% of people with disabilities hired. Then they would perhaps reconsider me for a job and take the time to look at my references, my skills and abilities. I need people to take that second glance; I need people to think again about their first impression.

I want to contribute to the Massachusetts economy more. I want to buy things, pay my own medical bills instead of relying on Commonwealth Care, and give more to charity. Yet as my life now stands I cannot do these things. This bill would help me and many others to show that yes, we are valuable members of society, and yes, we can contribute. We just need a better chance.

In summary, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council believes that HB110/SB86 will have a positive impact on people with disabilities if it is passed. We appreciate the opportunity to educate Committee members about the bill and welcome the opportunity to schedule a follow-up meeting with members if additional questions arise.

Sincerely,

Kate Ryan
Council Member
The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

